

STOP THE CHESTER ICE DETENTION CENTER

Community Action Guide for Chester, New York

THE CRISIS

ICE is attempting to convert a defunct tire warehouse at 29 Elizabeth Drive in Chester into a 1,500-person detention facility. This project represents a catastrophic threat on multiple fronts:

- Public Health Emergency: Zero municipal sewer capacity
- Environmental Destruction: Located in a 100-year floodplain
- Protected Species: Threatens three endangered species
- Federal Overreach: Bypass of local zoning and environmental laws

PUBLIC HEALTH NIGHTMARE

No Sewer Capacity

The Village of Chester has **explicitly confirmed** there is no sewer capacity for this facility. ICE plans to increase site occupancy from 150 people to 1,500 people—a **1,000% increase**—without adequate wastewater infrastructure.

Chester has already exceeded its 347,000 gallons-per-day allocation to the Moodna Sewer District. Packing thousands of people into this warehouse without proper sanitation infrastructure creates an imminent public health catastrophe.

ENVIRONMENTAL CATASTROPHE

Floodplain Location

The Department of Homeland Security has already issued a notice of activity in a **100-year floodplain**. This 400,000-square-foot site cannot handle the stormwater or wastewater impact without devastating consequences for local wetlands and water supplies.

Three Endangered Species at Risk

Converting this industrial property will destroy critical habitat for three federally protected species:

1. Bog Turtle

One of North America's smallest and most endangered turtles, bog turtles depend on the shallow, spring-fed wetlands surrounding Chester. Paving over this habitat is a death sentence for the local population.

2. Indiana Bat

These federally endangered bats use mature forested areas and wetland meadows for feeding and roosting. Destroying the floodplain eliminates the insect populations they depend on for survival.

3. Northern Long-Eared Bat

Another heavily protected bat species that relies on undisturbed tree canopy supported by local wetlands. Construction will devastate their remaining habitat.

ICE is willing to bulldoze federal environmental protections and drive endangered species toward extinction—just to warehouse human beings.

TAKE ACTION NOW

The ICE Scraper Campaign

Orange County Executive Steve Neuhaus is the key decision-maker. He can end the contract between Orange County and ICE, and his cooperation is essential to pass an emergency ban on new detention centers.

Send a physical reminder of community opposition:

- **Buy an inexpensive ice scraper** from a local, independent hardware store (*boycott Lowe's and Home Depot*—both corporations support the Trump administration)
- **Mail it to:** Orange County Government Center, Care of County Executive Steve Neuhaus, 255 Main Street, Goshen, NY 10924
- **Document your action:** Take a photo of your ice scraper and email it to bj@monroegazette.com (BJ at Monroe Gazette—one Z, two Ts). The Monroe Gazette is collecting photos to track community resistance.

CONTACT GOVERNMENT OFFICIALS

The agencies below have legal authority to stop this project. Use the provided scripts or adapt them in your own words.

1. New York State Governor

Governor Kathy Hochul Office of the Governor NYS State Capitol Building Albany, NY 12224 Phone: 518-474-8390 Website: governor.ny.gov

Authority: Can direct state agencies (DEC, DOT, DOH), initiate state-level eminent domain, order emergency environmental review.

MESSAGE SCRIPT: Governor Hochul, I am demanding that your office immediately invoke an emergency environmental review and explore state-level eminent domain to block the proposed ICE detention center at 29 Elizabeth Drive in Chester. This facility sits in a 100-year floodplain and threatens our local water supply. New York must protect its residents. Use every executive power you have to stop the federal government from converting this industrial site into a deportation camp before our ecosystem is destroyed.

2. New York State Attorney General

Letitia James Office of the Attorney General The Capitol Albany, NY 12224 Phone: 1-800-771-7755 Website: ag.ny.gov

Authority: Investigates environmental violations, investigates improper land deals, can file injunctions, can challenge unlawful approvals.

MESSAGE SCRIPT: Attorney General James, I am urging your office to file an immediate injunction against the Department of Homeland Security regarding their

proposed detention facility in Chester, NY. ICE intends to pack 1,500 people into a warehouse that lacks legal sewer capacity and sits in protected wetlands. Please investigate this improper land deal and use your authority to challenge any federal attempts to bypass local zoning, environmental, and public health laws.

3. NYS Department of Environmental Conservation

DEC Region 3 Office 21 South Putt Corners Road New Paltz, NY 12561 Phone: 845-256-3000 Email: r3info@dec.ny.gov Website: dec.ny.gov

Authority: Regulates wetlands, protected species, stormwater, contamination, hazardous waste. Enforces SEQR environmental review. Can halt or deny permits.

MESSAGE SCRIPT: To the DEC Region 3 Office: I am writing to raise an urgent alarm regarding the proposed ICE facility at 29 Elizabeth Drive in Chester. DHS has already issued a notice of activity in a 100-year floodplain. This 400,000-square-foot site cannot handle the stormwater or wastewater impact of 1,500 detainees without severely threatening local wetlands and protected wildlife. I am asking the DEC to enforce the strictest possible SEQR environmental review and deny all permits for this ecologically disastrous project.

4. NYS Department of Transportation

DOT Region 8 Office 4 Burnett Boulevard Poughkeepsie, NY 12603 Phone: 845-431-5750 Email: r08-info@dot.ny.gov Website: dot.ny.gov

Authority: Reviews traffic impact, road access, driveway permits, state highway connections. Can deny site access.

MESSAGE SCRIPT: To the DOT Region 8 Office: The proposed ICE detention center in Chester Industrial Park will create unsustainable traffic impact and severe hazards for state highway connections. The local infrastructure was not built for a federal detention facility processing thousands of people. I ask that the DOT review road access permits for 29 Elizabeth Drive and deny access based on severe transportation conflicts this facility will create.

5. NYS Department of Health

NYS DOH Corning Tower Empire State Plaza Albany, NY 12237 Phone: 518-474-2011 Website: health.ny.gov

Authority: Oversees sewer capacity, public health risks, water contamination, air quality, hazardous materials. Can block occupancy permits.

MESSAGE SCRIPT: To the Department of Health: The proposed ICE facility in Chester is a massive public health crisis waiting to happen. The Village of Chester has explicitly stated they have zero sewer capacity for this project. ICE wants to increase site occupancy by 1,000%, moving from 150 to 1,500 people, which will overwhelm the Moodna sewer district and create severe water contamination risks.

You must block occupancy permits to prevent a catastrophic public health emergency.

6. Empire State Development

ESD 625 Broadway Albany, NY 12245 Phone: 518-292-5100 Website: esd.ny.gov

Authority: Reviews economic development approvals, land use consistency. Has eminent domain powers.

MESSAGE SCRIPT: To Empire State Development: The acquisition of the Chester warehouse by ICE is a direct threat to Hudson Valley economic stability. This move takes a prime industrial property off the local tax rolls and offers zero benefit to New York residents. I am asking ESD to intervene, review this project for land use consistency, and explore eminent domain to reclaim this property for actual economic development—not federal warehousing of humans.

7. Orange County Government

County Executive Steve M. Neuhaus Orange County Government Center 255 Main Street Goshen, NY 10924 Phone: 845-291-2700 Email: countyexec@orangecountygov.com Website: orangecountygov.com

Orange County Planning Department Phone: 845-615-3840 Email: planning@orangecountygov.com

Authority: Regional planning, environmental health, sewer district approvals. Can block sewer expansions.

MESSAGE SCRIPT: County Executive Neuhaus and County Planners: Please hold the line on Moodna Sewer District capacity limits. It is documented that Chester has exceeded its 347,000 gallons-per-day allocation. Do not grant any sewer expansions or regional planning waivers for ICE. The county must use every infrastructural roadblock available to stop this project.

8. Orange County Sewer District No. 1

Sewer District No. 1 Phone: 845-291-2664

Authority: Controls hookups. Can deny capacity and block the facility outright.

MESSAGE SCRIPT: To Orange County Sewer District No. 1: The Village of Chester has confirmed there is absolutely no sewer capacity available for the ICE facility proposed at 29 Elizabeth Drive. A 1,000% increase in human occupancy at that site is completely unsustainable. I am calling on the district to formally and permanently deny any capacity requests or sewer hookups for the Department of Homeland Security at this location.

9. Town of Chester

Town Hall 1786 Kings Highway Chester, NY 10918 Phone: 845-469-7000 Website: chesterny.gov

Town Supervisor Robert Valentine Email: supervisor@chesterny.gov

Town Clerk Linda Zappala Email: townclerk@chesterny.gov Fax: 845-469-5999

Authority: Zoning interpretation, site plan approval, building permits. Can deny or delay approvals. Can request state intervention.

MESSAGE SCRIPT: To the Town of Chester: We stand with you in fighting this federal overreach. Please strictly enforce M-1 Industrial District zoning laws and existing Restrictive Covenants that prohibit residential use and nuisances at Chester Industrial Park. Do not issue any site plan approvals, building permits, or zoning variances for ICE. Use your local law requiring special permits for temporary residency of vulnerable people to delay and permanently block this facility.

10. U.S. Army Corps of Engineers

New York District 26 Federal Plaza New York, NY 10278 Phone: 917-790-8511 Website: nan.usace.army.mil

Authority: Wetlands, waterways, fill permits. Can block construction.

MESSAGE SCRIPT: To the Army Corps of Engineers: I am submitting a formal concern regarding the DHS proposal for 29 Elizabeth Drive in Chester, NY. This property is in a 100-year floodplain. Converting this massive warehouse into a detention facility for 1,500 people will require significant infrastructural changes that threaten surrounding wetlands and waterways. I ask that you heavily scrutinize and deny any fill permits or construction approvals by ICE for this site.

11. DHS Oversight Offices

DHS Office for Civil Rights & Civil Liberties Email: crcl@hq.dhs.gov Phone: 202-401-1474 Website: dhs.gov/crcl

DHS Office of Inspector General Hotline: 1-800-323-8603 Website: oig.dhs.gov

MESSAGE SCRIPT: To the Inspector General and CRCL: I am filing a complaint regarding ICE's acquisition of the warehouse in Chester, NY. ICE is attempting to bypass critical environmental regulations to warehouse 1,500 people in a 100-year floodplain with zero local sewer capacity. This project poses an imminent threat to human life, constitutes massive waste of taxpayer funds, and ignores documented public health hazards. You must launch an immediate investigation into this acquisition.

12. Media Contacts

Times Herald-Record: recordonline.com

Spectrum News Hudson Valley: spectrumlocalnews.com

Monroe Gazette: monroegazette.com Email: editor@monroegazette.com

MESSAGE SCRIPT: To the Editor/News Desk: Please keep the spotlight on the proposed ICE detention center in Chester. ICE is trying to push through a 400,000-square-foot facility in a 100-year floodplain with zero sewer capacity. This isn't just an immigration story—it is a massive environmental and public health crisis for Orange County. The local government is preparing to sue, and the facility's connection to billionaire Carl Icahn needs more investigative scrutiny. The public needs you to keep covering this.

13. Utilities & Infrastructure

Orange & Rockland Utilities: oru.com

MESSAGE SCRIPT: To Orange & Rockland Utilities: The Hudson Valley community is deeply opposed to the ICE detention center proposed for Chester Industrial Park. As a utility provider, you should be aware of the immense infrastructural strain this facility will place on the grid and local resources. We ask that you closely review any commercial upgrade requests for 29 Elizabeth Drive and stand with the community and local government who are fighting this hazardous project.

WHY THIS MATTERS

Chester is a small municipality facing an unprecedented federal overreach. Local government has been clear:

- There is NO sewer capacity
- The site sits in a 100-year floodplain
- Three endangered species will be driven toward extinction
- ICE is bypassing local zoning to warehouse human beings in a failing industrial site

Chester cannot fight the federal government and corporate billionaires alone. They need our collective pressure.

This is not just an immigration issue—it's a public health emergency, an environmental catastrophe, and a test of whether local communities can protect themselves from federal overreach that threatens their safety, their ecosystems, and their future.

YOUR VOICE MATTERS

Every phone call, email, and ice scraper sends a message:

We will not allow our communities to be sacrificed for detention centers that ignore human rights, public health, and environmental protection.

Act today. Contact officials. Send your ice scraper. Document your action.

Chester needs you.